



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Abercarn Primary School
Chapel Of Ease
Abercarn
NP11 5LH**

Date of inspection: November 2017

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

About Abercarn Primary School

Abercarn Primary School is in the village of Abercarn within Caerphilly local authority. There are 253 pupils aged three to eleven years on roll, including 34 pupils who attend the nursery on a part-time basis.

The school has identified around 18% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, including very few pupils with statements of special educational needs.

Approximately 15% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below average for the local authority and Wales. Very few pupils are looked after by the local authority. In the 12 months before to the inspection, one pupil received a temporary exclusion.

Nearly all pupils are of white British ethnicity. No pupil speaks Welsh at home. A very few pupils speak English as an additional language.

The headteacher took up post in September 2011. The school's previous inspection was in April 2012.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

The school is a safe, happy and caring community that nurtures pupils' personal, social, spiritual and cultural skills well. There is a strong inclusive, caring and supportive ethos of trust and teamwork. Nearly all pupils behave very well in class and around the school. They are polite and friendly, and treat other children and adults with respect. Most pupils make good progress and achieve very well by the end of key stage 2. Pupils with additional learning needs make particularly good progress. Nearly all teachers are confident and well organised, and manage their classroom resources effectively. They know their pupils well and have high expectations of what they can achieve. Leaders are effective and have been successful in bringing about improvements across the school.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Improve provision for outdoor learning in the foundation phase
- R2 Improve opportunities for staff to develop their professional practice with other schools

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Around half of pupils start school with skills and knowledge that are below the level expected for their age. As they move through the school, most make good progress and achieve very well by the end of key stage 2. Pupils with additional learning needs make particularly good progress.

As pupils move through the foundation phase, most pupils make good progress in developing their literacy skills. They begin by using their knowledge of letters and sounds to recognise words. By the end of the foundation phase, most pupils show enthusiasm for reading and use their skills to decode unfamiliar words and show confidence when describing the features of texts, such as a contents page and chapters. The most able empathise with characters in texts they read. As a result, they understand how lonely and sad it was for soldiers at Christmas, fighting in the trenches in the Second World War. Most pupils speak confidently about work they feel particularly proud of and recall the main points of a familiar text. Most pupils make good progress in developing their writing skills, and write with increasing accuracy and good letter formation. They write in full sentences, using appropriate punctuation. They use these skills appropriately when writing across the curriculum.

As pupils move through key stage 2, they write in a variety of forms including diary extracts, play scripts, instructions, poetry, historic fact files, and information texts. Most pupils' written work is of a high standard and they apply their skills in a range of situations across the curriculum, for example when writing a letter about the effects of global warming or writing newspaper articles. Most pupils take pride in the presentation of their work. They are able to write legibly and make good progress in developing a joined handwriting style. They redraft independently, using a wider range of tools to improve the quality of their work, such as an online thesaurus. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils make good progress in reading. They are able to make inferences from the text and read accurately and fluently. They demonstrate positive attitudes towards reading and use their skills effectively across the curriculum. Nearly all pupils are able to express themselves clearly and confidently, for example when discussing the features of an effective newspaper article.

Most pupils develop a wide range of numeracy skills and make good progress as they move through the school. By the end of foundation phase, most pupils can count in 2s, 5s, and 10s. They use simple number bonds to help them calculate increasingly complex addition and subtraction problems. They use their knowledge of doubling and halving to explore patterns in number. They use their numeric skills across the curriculum when creating fact files about themselves and their peers, for example to measure their height, hand span and shoe size. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils are confident in dealing with a range of mathematical concepts and problems. As pupils move through key stage 2, they are able to order three digit numbers with reasonable accuracy. Most pupils are able to use standard measures of weight, for example when measuring in kilograms and grams. By the end of key stage 2, pupils use their mathematical knowledge to calculate area and volume of 2D and 3D shapes using formula.

Most pupils develop appropriate skills in information and communication technology (ICT). In the foundation phase, they confidently access a range of applications and use a range of equipment, including programmable toys, tablets, and computers to support their learning well. Most pupils develop their skills by creating pictures using paint packages and send emails about a visit from Paddington Bear. Most pupils develop early coding skills and continue to build on these early skills as they move through the school. Most pupils, by the end of key stage 2, develop highly effective coding skills to write their own interactive game. They use spreadsheets and databases effectively across the curriculum. For example, pupils use a formula within a spreadsheet to calculate costs of furnishing a room. An increasing number of pupils across key stage 2 are effective in using their ICT skills to run the radio station, during lunch and break times. Those older pupils, who have the opportunity to work within the station, share their skills with younger pupils.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their Welsh language skills. Pupils in the foundation phase respond appropriately to a range of instructions given in Welsh and can ask, and answer, simple questions. By the end of foundation phase, pupils read familiar texts within increasing accuracy and fluency. They can write simple stories about going to a party, using familiar patterns. Across key stage 2, pupils recognise familiar favourite foods and can explain why they like them. By Year 6, many pupils sustain a simple conversation in Welsh. All pupils who work within the radio station use their Welsh skills to promote every day Welsh phrases, within radio broadcasts. Many pupils are able to read simple texts with understanding, with generally accurate pronunciation. They write short paragraphs about themselves that contain suitable detail and innovate familiar texts to write a book review.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils behave very well in class and around the school. They are polite and friendly, and treat other children and adults with respect. They understand and abide consistently by the school rules. Nearly all pupils feel that they are treated fairly by adults and are confident to contact 'school buddies' or staff if they are worried or concerned. Nearly all co-operate very well in lessons when working in pairs and groups. As a result, nearly all pupils feel safe and happy in school.

Nearly all have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Most pupils are well aware of the importance of keeping fit and healthy. Many pupils speak enthusiastically about sports clubs in the school. Most enjoy physical exercise and participate enthusiastically in the 'Daily Mile' walk, which has recently been introduced by the school council.

Nearly all pupils are proud of their school and the roles they play within it. Many pupils take on additional responsibilities. For instance, older key stage 2 pupils support younger pupils at lunch and playtimes, and 'Attendance Ambassadors' mentor their peers to attend school regularly. The school council and the pupil leadership team play a full role in the life of the school. Class representatives have a daily slot on the school radio and members of the pupil leadership team have begun to observe lessons.

Nearly all pupils work hard and do their best. They are interested in and enthusiastic about their learning. They are confident and persevere with tasks even when they find them difficult. Many older pupils have developed good strategies to help them understand and complete trickier tasks. Most pupils are eager to share their learning experiences and can talk extensively about their work. Many older pupils are particularly skilled in evaluating their work and the work of other pupils, usually offering helpful and constructive criticism.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Overall teaching in the school is good. Nearly all teachers are confident and well organised, and manage their classrooms resources effectively. They know their pupils well and have high expectations of what they can achieve. As a result, pupils know exactly what is expected of them, and are attentive and keen to learn.

All teachers plan lessons very carefully. They successfully match learning activities to their pupils' differing abilities and needs. In many lessons, support staff make a particularly good contribution to this by leading small group activities. For example, pupils across the foundation phase work in small groups every day to develop their reading and writing skills.

In almost all lessons, teachers make sure that pupils understand the focus of the lesson and what they need to learn. Staff explain clearly the activities that pupils will undertake and the goals that they should achieve. They question pupils skilfully to check on their progress during lessons and to challenge them to think more deeply.

All teachers include pupils well in judging what they have achieved in a lesson and in identifying how they could improve their work or their understanding. This begins in the nursery and is systematic across the school. All teachers mark and assess pupils' work regularly. As a result, nearly all teachers are able to judge pupils' progress accurately. They make good use of their own and their pupils' observations to adapt future lessons and to monitor pupils' progress towards their targets.

Nearly all teachers take good account of their pupils' interests and abilities when developing their lessons. Many include a good range of stimulating and challenging activities, which motivate pupils well and support them to make good progress in their learning. For example, well-planned physical education lessons develop pupils' physical skills effectively.

Across the school, all teachers plan very systematically to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy, and ICT skills, both within subject lessons and across the curriculum. As a result, pupils have interesting opportunities to apply these skills in their topic lessons. For example, Reception pupils enjoy drawing and writing about their favourite characters on computers and then saving their work independently.

Teachers also devise imaginative and stimulating activities within the regular themed weeks. For instance, during the school's expressive art week, younger key stage 2 pupils particularly enjoy acting out scenes from the musical "Grease" and recording their roleplays on tablet computers.

Teachers in the foundation phase plan worthwhile experiences and create a stimulating and well-resourced indoor environment that develops pupils' enthusiasm for learning well. However, outdoor areas are not similarly well resourced and used. As a result, younger pupils have few opportunities to learn outdoors, particularly independently.

Regular Welsh lessons across the school help pupils to develop their skills well. There are more frequent opportunities for pupils to hear and use Welsh around the school. For example, the popular school radio station has recently begun broadcasting Welsh 'phrases of the week'.

The school's curriculum provides a wide range of valuable experiences for pupils, which enhance their learning. For example, older key stage 2 pupils stay at Llangrannog residential centre where they develop their social skills and self-confidence well. Teachers also plan appropriate opportunities for pupils to visit places of interest around Wales linked to their topic work such as Caerleon and Swansea museum.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a safe, happy, and caring community that nurtures pupils' personal, social, spiritual and cultural skills well. There is a strong inclusive, caring, and supportive ethos of trust and teamwork. Staff know their pupils well and respond to their emotional and physical needs appropriately.

Provision for pupils who need additional support is strong and the school uses a wide range of programmes that meet their needs successfully. Leaders and teachers use assessment information well to plan effective support in classes and through withdrawal groups. Well-trained staff deliver a range of intervention programmes to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, such as a reading catch-up programme for younger key stage 2 pupils. There are beneficial programmes to support vulnerable pupils, including those with emotional needs. For example, emotional literacy groups have a positive impact on raising pupils' self-esteem and, as a result, they demonstrate improved levels of confidence and engagement in school life.

The school offers a good range of opportunities for parents to learn how to support their children's wellbeing through regular parental consultations and workshops that promote a positive approach to life-long learning. The school ensures that parents and pupils are aware of the value of attending school regularly and of arriving on time. Leaders, in effective partnership with the education welfare officer, have improved strategies for promoting attendance. As a result of these successful strategies, far fewer pupils are late at the start of the school day and persistent absence is low.

Staff promote pupils' cultural development well through a broad range of musical, dance, and artistic experiences, for example through cultural experience days. Educational visits help to broaden pupils' understanding of the topics covered. For example, older key stage 2 pupils visit the British Museum to complement their work on the Romans.

There are worthwhile opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning such as digital leaders, school and eco councillors. Pupils are beginning to play a strategic role in the development of the school. For example, pupil-led 'buddie' groups organise anti-bullying activities and monitor the impact on the playground.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn how to be healthy. For example, pupils take a leading role in selling and promoting fruit at playtime. The curriculum provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to participate in sports, such as gymnastics and dance. A suitable range of after-school clubs promotes pupils' fitness well such as football, netball, and yoga. As a result, most pupils have a good understanding of the effect of lifestyle choices on their health.

There is thorough provision to ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe, such as using the internet and reporting any concerns. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides effective leadership and leads by example. Together with his senior leadership team, he provides the school with consistent and supportive direction, focusing appropriately on the development of pupils' wellbeing and progress. They set high expectations of themselves, the wider team, and pupils. Together the whole team work successfully in bringing about improvement across the school. All staff have clear roles, responsibilities, and have a positive impact on improving pupils' outcomes, for example in reading. The recent development of the radio station is securing positive attitudes towards learning.

The governing body is supportive of the work of the school and is developing its ability to challenge and support more effectively. Governors have a sound knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They hold the school to account in terms of progress in areas such as Welsh. They have a clear understanding of the day-to-day working of the school and make link visits, where they meet pupils and staff. As a result, they have a better understanding of standards and provision of mathematics and physical education. Governors continually challenge themselves, as they reflect on their own skills and knowledge and evaluate their own strengths and development areas. They make appropriate decisions in relation to staffing and resources. Generally, governors have a satisfactory understanding of the changing financial circumstances of the school.

The school uses a wide range of first-hand evidence to evaluate its current performance and to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Leaders provide detailed school development plans that focus appropriately on areas such as literacy, numeracy, and Welsh. The plans include clear priorities and detailed actions, along with appropriate timescales and sensible allocation of resources. Leaders monitor these plans well and assess how effective they are in securing improvements in areas such as teaching, assessment and developing digital competency.

Leaders provide professional learning opportunities for all staff. Senior leaders, middle leaders, teaching assistants and pupils receive appropriate training, for example in the development of the digital competency framework. Staff take part in professional learning experiences within the school, for example through sharing good practice sessions. The school has begun to host sharing of good practice sessions with other schools in relation to their radio station; this is at an early stage of implementation. Opportunities for all staff to develop their own professional learning beyond the school are limited.

The school focuses appropriately on national priorities including the development of pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy, the introduction of the digital competency framework, improving attendance and reducing the adverse effect of poverty on pupils' standards and wellbeing.

The school makes good use of the pupil development grant to meet the needs of pupils eligible for free school meals effectively. The development of intervention programmes in literacy, numeracy, and pupil wellbeing supports pupils with a range of social, emotional, and learning needs successfully.

Although leaders plan for the short term and long term needs of pupils appropriately, there have been occasions over the last five years where the school has had a deficit budget. Leaders review spending and identify clearly where this is likely to exceed planned projections. As a result, the school has appropriate plans to balance the budget.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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